

SEASONS for the SOUL

around the Christian Year



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The Christian Year

and the Christian Life

THIS WORLD WOULD BE A WEARY PLACE INDEED if all the days and seasons were the same. Perhaps there would be no life at all and the earth would be as barren as the mountains on the moon, for there is no growth without change. We know how monotony deadens our hearts and dulls our minds, and an unchanging spiritual climate can cast a deadly blight upon our souls. So, our heavenly Father gives us in the world of nature the ordered rhythm of the changing seasons, seed time and harvest, times for all the intricate and interrelated processes of growth and flowering, of birth and death and rebirth, in plants and in all His living creatures; and for our growth in the mysterious, deep and delicate life of the spirit, He gives us in the Church the changing seasons of the Christian year. Just as a great tree grows strong and beautiful through many seasons, bright and stormy, so a holy soul grows up into Christ through the disciplines and joys of many holy fasts and festivals. But we who are to be 'rooted and grounded in love' need permanence as well as change, and that He gives us, too, for though each of the Church's seasons is different from the others, each of them is every year the same.

A MULTITUDE OF CHRISTIANS WHICH NONE CAN NUMBER has lived the Christian life in the Christian year. Through centuries of Advents and Christmases, Lents and Easters and Pentecosts, they have been led along the way of Christ, lighted with the truth of Christ, fed with the life of Christ. And so are we, whoever and wherever we may be. The small, unruly child, stilled into awe and wonder at the sight of the Christmas altar; the new convert, ignorant and eager and grateful; the unlettered tribesman from the dark jungle; the lost sheep, returned after long wanderings; the soul far advanced in years and holiness; we can all grow up together in the Christian year, each growing at his own pace, each giving his own gifts, each receiving according to his own needs.

WHEN WE DELIBERATELY FOLLOW OUR LORD THROUGH THE CHRISTIAN YEAR, we cease to be the

slaves of our limitations, our sins and our weaknesses begin to fall away. We find with the saints that each day and season lends its tone to our spirits, bracing, comforting, purging, enlivening, until through many Christian years we grow into the likeness of Him whom we follow.

IN EVERY CHRISTIAN YEAR THE FACTS OF OUR FAITH, the events in the life of our blessed Lord, the words and deeds of His ministry, are presented to us anew. We are not permitted a sentimental choosing of just what appeals to us, or a lazy ignoring of all that we do not understand. In scriptures, sermons, hymns, and ceremonies we are given the whole, wonderful, mysterious, painful, joyful story again and again. And as each year new insights come to us we look at Christ, we learn to know Christ, we come to love Christ, we begin to serve Christ.

BUT THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS NOT JUST FOLLOWING CHRIST, hearing about Christ, nor even loving Christ and serving Him. It is far more than that. It is union with Him. We are to dwell in Him and He in us. And every Christian year for twenty centuries has revolved around the act of communion that He gave us 'in the night in which he was betrayed.' 'Take, eat, this is my body, which is given for you.' 'Drink ye all of this; for this is my Blood of the New Testament, which is shed for you.' At all times and in all places Christians have fed upon the same Holy Food. Each time that we go to Holy Communion we ourselves are different; our Lord when He comes to us fills a different need. Year after year, through the dear familiar cycle, we offer our ever-changing selves at the altar; we feed upon our never-changing Lord. The joyful Christmas self, the self of the somber Lenten mornings, the quite different self of the radiant Easter Days, all are offered and presented, fed and hallowed by our Saviour. 'He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him . . . he that eateth of this bread shall live forever.' (St. John 6:56, 58b.)



The Advent Collect

Darkness, Light and Judgment

A SEASON OF JOYFUL EXPECTANCY AND HOLY FEAR begins our Christian life in the Christian year. Advent is first of all a preparation for Christmas, which commemorates the coming of Jesus Christ to be our Saviour; but it is also, and this we sometimes forget, a preparation for His coming again with Glory to be our Judge. As part of our preparation for these two comings, one so joyful, one so solemn, we are given a beautiful collect 'to be repeated every day, . . . until Christmas Day.' (Prayer Book, page 90.)

ALMIGHTY GOD, GIVE US GRACE — Our first act is to acknowledge that of ourselves we are helpless, that only God can prepare us for the coming of God; so we open our hearts and ask Him for His grace, His help, in order —

THAT WE MAY CAST AWAY THE WORKS OF DARKNESS — What are the works of darkness? Alas, we know them all too well, for they are within us and all around us. They may be summed up in one small word: sin. Sin is a theological word for selfishness. My will be done. And from our collective sinfulness, the hardness of our hearts, come all the world's dark horrors, fear, cruelty, hunger, disease, vice, slums, atom bombs. However, it is within ourselves, not in the outside world, that each of us must begin the casting away. Our task is to look into the sinful works of darkness in our own souls, to cast them away by repentance and confession, for it is only in receiving God's forgiveness that we can begin to —

PUT UPON US THE ARMOUR OF LIGHT — When we are armed with a light we have no fear of darkness; it ceases to exist. But the light that dispels darkness also reveals what the darkness hid. It shows up not only our deeds of evil but our poor little attempt at goodness. In the blazing light of Christ's holiness our superficial kindness, our easy amiability, our busy good works, look as shabby as furniture that is brought out into the sun on moving day. Already we are judged by the mere presence of the Light. Well may we cry out for grace, grace for growth in holiness, to help us to

face the coming of the Light of the World. And when is our casting away and putting on to take place?

NOW — Here is the crucial word. *Now*. Not when we get around to it. Not when it is convenient. Not in the time that is left over after our work and play, our clubs and hobbies, our sports and TV and magazines, have devoured our days and left us old men and women afraid to die, but *now*. There is a terrible urgency about that word *now* —

IN THE TIME OF THIS MORTAL LIFE, IN WHICH THY SON JESUS CHRIST CAME TO VISIT US IN GREAT HUMILITY — In the time of this our mortal life, into our dark and sinful world, came the 'one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, . . . God of God, Light of Light, Very God of very God.' He came to visit us in very great humility indeed. What could be more humble than a new baby, born to a poor girl, in the dirty stable of a small town inn? But thus it was that Love came to dwell among us, and so He continues to come to us, in humble and unspectacular ways, in the sacraments and in our prayers and in all the circumstances of our daily lives. He comes to us now so —

THAT IN THE LAST DAY, WHEN HE SHALL COME AGAIN IN HIS GLORIOUS MAJESTY TO JUDGE BOTH THE QUICK AND THE DEAD, WE MAY RISE TO THE LIFE IMMORTAL — This stirring clause brings us to the second and less popular aspect of Advent, the Four Last Things. These are Death, Judgment, Heaven and Hell; and whether we like it or not sooner or later we must all face them. The humble Baby lying in the blessed Virgin's arms in the silent night grows up to be the King of Glory, the Judge from whom no secrets are hid. But if we have received Him as our Redeemer and Saviour, He will Himself prepare us for His coming as our Judge. So, let us make our prayer with hopefulness —

THROUGH HIM WHO LIVETH AND REIGNETH WITH THEE AND THE HOLY GHOST, NOW AND EVER. AMEN.



Some Thoughts About Advent

Joy and Holy Fear

HOW MANY CHRISTIANS EVER STOP TO WONDER WHAT HAS BECOME OF ADVENT? It would never occur to us to start celebrating Easter during Lent, but we have come to accept with only an occasional feeble protest Christmas festivities throughout the season of Advent, Christmas parades at Thanksgiving, carols blaring from loudspeakers for weeks in advance, and Christmas greens withering before ever the holy day has dawned. With all this premature and misplaced celebration even devoted Church people can become jaded and callous and forget that Christmas is a holy day, a feast of the Church, and that it is not to be celebrated before Christmas eve. In our material preparation for Christmas, let us not be so feverishly preoccupied with *things* that we forget our spiritual preparation. As part of this preparation, let us use each day the beautiful Advent collect on page 90 of the Prayer Book.

ADVENT MEANS 'COMING.' All of us know what it is to prepare for the coming of a very special visitor. An atmosphere of joyful anticipation pervades the house but there is much work and anxious preparation, too. We look critically around the house. The furniture must be polished and the curtains washed. Stacks of old magazines that have been cluttering up the house must be thrown away. Seen through the eyes of a visitor, some of the rooms will look shabby, even dirty; let us clean them out and give them a coat of paint. Everything must be just right.

AND SO IT IS IN THE CHURCH when during Advent we prepare for the coming of the most dearly loved and anxiously awaited Guest of all, our blessed Lord Himself. As through the long ages Israel hoped for the coming of the Messiah, as Mary looked forward with longing to the Birth of her Son, so we await with joy the coming of the Christ Child Who brings light to our darkness and holiness to our sinfulness. But the Birth at Bethlehem, which we celebrate at Christmas, is not the only Coming to which we look forward; for 'He shall come again, with glory, to judge both

the quick and the dead' and *how will He find us then?* What response have we made to the love that has been poured out upon us? Underlying the joy of Advent is somberness and holy fear. It is a time for self-examination, for spiritual house-cleaning, for penitence and resolution.

WE LOOK FORWARD, THEN, TO OUR LORD'S COMING to be our Judge, as well as to His Birth into the world at Christmas; and as we prepare for His coming to us in our Christmas communions, let us heed His voice which says: 'If thou wilt that I shall come to thee and dwell with thee, free thee of all the old filth of sin, and cleanse also the habitation of thine heart, and make it pleasant and fair . . . for a true lover will prepare for his beloved the best and the fairest place that he can, for in that is known the love and affection of him that receiveth his friend.' (The Imitation of Christ, IV, 12.)



An Advent List

For Housekeepers

CLEAN HOUSE — Many of us who detest dirt in the house are quite content to live with sin in the soul. (Sin is just another word for selfishness.) Let us remember to begin our Advent spiritual housecleaning by asking God to help us to see in just what ways we are selfish. Let us look our sins in the face, confess them, and ask God's help in cleaning them out. (Memorize the Advent Collect — page 90.)

CLEAR OUT GUEST ROOM CLOSETS — If we are to make room in our hearts for Mary's Child there are many things we shall have to get rid of. 'From all blindness of heart; from pride, vainglory, and hypocrisy; from envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness, Good Lord, deliver us.'

DISPOSE OF OLD MAGAZINES AND NEWSPAPERS — And resolve to leave the new ones, however tempting, unread until we have read, marked, learned and inwardly digested a daily Bible passage. (Memorize the collect for Advent II — page 92.)

GET FRUITS FOR FRUITCAKE — But remember that citron, cherries, pineapple and raisins are not the only fruits we need as Christmas approaches. The Fruits of the Spirit are even more desirable. They are 'love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.' (Memorize this list — Galatians 5:22, 23.)

ORDER CHRISTMAS TURKEY — And remember that the Christ Child will find many of His dear ones hungry unless we feed them. There are six fast days (Fridays and Ember Days) in Advent. (Remember to deny ourselves on those days and give money to *The Feed the Hungry Fund* for the Presiding Bishop's Fund for World Relief.)

ADDRESS CHRISTMAS CARDS — They can carry something much deeper than affection if we pray for each person whose name we write on an envelope.

MAKE SHOPPING LISTS — And remember that there are churches downtown near the shops. Include on every list a visit to our Father's house for a few minutes of quiet prayer.

TELL THE CHILDREN ABOUT SANTA CLAUS — That he is St. Nicholas, the kind and generous Bishop of Myra who lived in what is now Turkey about 350 A.D. St. Nicholas went about dropping bags of coins down the fireless chimneys of the poor so that none of our dear Lord's little children would be neglected at Christmas.

MAKE LIST FOR CHRISTMAS PARTY — Are we really 'in love and charity' with *all* our neighbors? Or is there someone, friend or relative, to whom we must go, pride in pocket, to make our Christmas peace?

GET CHRISTMAS TREE AND GREENS — To put up on Christmas Eve to honor the birthday of our Lord. They are not appropriate during the solemn season of Advent. An Advent Wreath of evergreens with four candles (light one more each Sunday) symbolizes the approach of Him who is the Light of the world.

PREPARE GIFT FOR THE CHRIST CHILD — Will the 'self' to be offered and presented at the Christmas altar be quiet, disciplined, humble, loving — the best gift we can give? Will our Infant Saviour when He comes to us in our Christmas Holy Communion find us ready to receive Him? Preparation for this exchange of Gifts is the most important work of Advent.

DO NOT FORGET 'THE FOUR LAST THINGS' — Which are brought to our remembrance in the Advent season. They are Death, Judgment, Heaven and Hell. 'Nobody escapes death. Nobody is exempt from judgment, everybody will end up either in heaven or in hell.' Remember that the Holy Child who comes at Christmas 'shall come again, with glory, to judge both the quick and the dead . . .' 'Almighty God, give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armour of light . . .'



Christmas

The Stable, The Tree and The Altar

GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST — The song of the Christmas angels sings in our hearts at Christmas. From the angels we learn to come before our heavenly Father rapt in wonder. We must learn this from them for they have seen what we of ourselves cannot even dimly imagine, the splendor and majesty of God, His radiance and holiness, the depths of His wisdom, the heights of His love. So with voices that are only beginning to learn to sing His praises, with hearts that have not yet learned to adore Him, we join with the angels and the saints to give Him the highest glory. But if we go to God with the very deepest awe, He ever comes to us with simplicity; He gives Himself to us in humble and homely ways. His most precious and holy Gift was given once in a stable, then upon a tree, and ever since in broken Bread upon the altar.

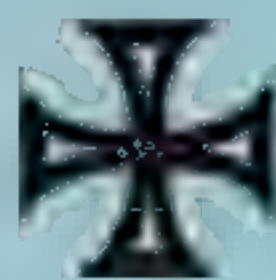
THE STABLE — Have you ever wondered why our Lord was born in a stable? Surely the divine Maker of heaven and earth well knew that there would be no room for His Son in the inn. There must have been a reason for the stable. Was it perhaps that to this poor shelter, shared with the beasts, no one, not any one, would fear to come? The shepherds must have felt quite at home in the stable, but had the holy Child been born in a king's house, or even in the simple inn, would they have ventured to visit Him? The Gift of God's only begotten Son was not given just to the kind of nice, respectable people who always have hotel reservations. It was given to *all men*, and like all God's gifts it was a gift of love and given in such a way that all men could receive it. The example of the one perfect Gift given in a stable makes us search our hearts. To whom have we given gifts at Christmas? Are our gifts to be found only where there are gifts in abundance? Or can we go to bed on the holy night with peace in our hearts knowing that we have given unto some of the least of our dear Lord's brethren, and therefore unto Him?

THE TREE — The pagan evergreen tree, which from the

remotest pre-historic antiquity was a symbol of the returning light in the first lengthening days of the dark winter, has come to be for us a symbol of the joy of Christmas, the birth of the Light of the world. Our hearts are warmed at the sight of its beauty, all color and light and glitter. But we can know the very deepest joy at Christmas only if we see beyond it another tree, stripped of its fruit and foliage, yet bearing a Gift richer far than those on any Christmas tree, however richly decked, however dearly laden. It was on the bare tree of the Cross that the holy Child given to us in the stable gave Himself in sacrifice to save us all. So, at Christmas let us remember the tree of sacrifice, 'For it is from the Cross that the light of God's love shines forth upon the world in its fullest splendor.'

THE ALTAR — Upon the Christmas altar, ablaze with lights, decked with flowers, and surrounded by all the beauty our love and skill can offer, the Gift given in the stable, the Gift given upon the tree, is given to us again; for Christ lying in the manger and Christ dying upon the Cross are there together, and He gives Himself to us in the humble Bread and Wine of our Christmas Holy Communion. And we do not come to the altar empty-handed to receive the precious Gift. With what humble and holy joy do we 'offer and present' to the new-born King 'our selves, our souls, and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and living sacrifice . . .' Nor do we come to Him alone. Beside us as we kneel are all the Christians who through the long centuries have offered themselves and received Christ at the altar of the Christ Mass. With them, and 'with Angels and Archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify thy glorious Name; evermore praising thee, and saying,

'HOLY, HOLY, HOLY, Lord God of hosts, Heaven and earth are full of thy glory: Glory be to thee, O Lord Most High. Amen.'



The Epiphany,

or the Manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles

EPIPHANY IS A FEAST OF LIGHT, of the 'shining forth' in the world of the glory of the Son of God. Christians have always thought of their Lord in terms of light. Over and over again in the Bible we are told that He is Light, the Light that shineth in darkness, 'the true Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world.' At Epiphany we think of the first shining of this Light and commemorate three events by which an obscure Baby, born in a stable in a little town in a remote Roman province and brought up in a carpenter's shop, was first made known as God of God and Light of Light in the world He came to save.

'THE WISE MEN FROM THE EAST' were the first outsiders to whom God revealed His divine Son. They followed the star's bright light expecting to find a king, but they do not seem to have been dismayed when the king turned out to be a humble Baby lying in the straw, for we are told that 'they rejoiced with exceeding great joy' and that 'they fell down and worshipped him.' Tradition says that they gave Him three gifts from their treasure: gold because He was King; frankincense because He was God; and, because He was Man and must die, myrrh to anoint His body for burial. The next event that Epiphany commemorates is the baptism of our Lord, which marks the beginning of His public ministry. It was what happened at the baptism, 'the Spirit, like a dove, descending upon him,' the 'voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,' which disclosed that Jesus was the Messiah. The third Epiphany event is our Lord's first miracle, the turning of the water into wine at the marriage in Cana, 'by which he manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him.'

OUR LORD'S MANIFESTATION IN THE WORLD reminds us that Epiphany is a *missionary* season, and that the shining forth of the Light of Christ must be a continuing thing. In every generation Christ is made known through *people*, parents, teachers, priests, friends, writers, artists — people just like ourselves. Just as the saints of the past and

the holy people we have known have given us the light by reflecting His light, we are so to dwell in Him that He may ever dwell in us and shine forth in *our* lives to all around us; and 'to them that are far off' as well as 'to them that are nigh,' for it is our special work and joy, through our fervent prayer and our diligent labor and our liberal giving, 'to make him known to all nations as their Saviour and their King.'

(Note: To manifest is 'To show plainly; to make to appear distinctly; to put beyond question or doubt; to display; exhibit; reveal; prove . . .')

The events mentioned in paragraph two are described in the Gospels for Epiphany, The Second Sunday after the Epiphany and The Third Sunday after the Epiphany — Pages 108, 112 and 113 in The Book of Common Prayer.



Lent

Prayer, Almsgiving and Fasting

WHAT IS THE CHRISTIAN LIFE? That is the question we must answer before we can know just what Lent is, what it should mean to us, what we are to do about it; for Lent is simply the season of the Christian Year when we seek to live the Christian life more intensively than most of us can manage to do all the year around. The Christian life is a process of growth *in Christ*, in which the love of God and our neighbor replaces the love of self. Three of its most characteristic activities are Prayer, Almsgiving and Fasting. During Lent we are to devote ourselves with all our hearts to these three works of love that our blessed Lord enjoined upon us.

THE LOVE OF GOD GROWS IN US THROUGH PRAYER — And this includes Holy Communion and devotional reading, all our intercourse with Him. We cannot love God, or any other person, unless we know Him; we cannot know Him unless we spend time with Him. We all know how even a brief opportunity for intimate companionship enables us to make deep and lasting friendships with people who might otherwise have remained casual acquaintances. God is always seeking to draw us into intimate companionship with Him. During Lent let us try to respond to His loving invitation in one or more of the following ways: Spend a few minutes longer each day in prayer — Spend some time each week praying in a church — Form the habit of making your first waking thought a thought of God — Remember Him and turn to Him at certain times during the day — Make a daily meditation, i.e. Use a short Gospel passage as a basis for thinking about God and His will for you in order to do that will — Meet our blessed Lord at the altar in Holy Communion once more each week than is your regular practice.

THE LOVE OF OUR NEIGHBOR GROWS IN US THROUGH ALMSGIVING — In the literal sense this means giving money for the deeply Christian duty of providing for the hungry, the stranger, the naked, the sick; but almsgiving 'includes, besides giving money, giving yourself, your time and trouble: i.e. in visits or letters to lonely and unattractive

people, in volunteering for tiresome or uninteresting jobs, in listening patiently to other people's worries, etc. All actions which help others at a real cost to ourselves are alms; and alms are gifts offered to God through His other children.'*

WE OUTGROW THE LOVE OF SELF THROUGH FASTING — Old-fashioned Christian self-denial. The whole process of self-discipline is aimed at freeing us from our narrow, selfish, self-regarding selves. We cannot love God and our neighbor if we are busy loving ourselves; we cannot be filled with God's grace if we are full of ourselves; we cannot take up our crosses and follow Christ if we cannot deny ourselves. It is by fasting, self-denial, that we gain the freedom and time and money that we need for prayer and almsgiving. Try some of the following:

Food — Cut down on food and give the money saved to *The Feed the Hungry Fund* for *The Presiding Bishop's Fund for World Relief*.

Time — Get up earlier in the morning to gain time for prayer and helping others. Cut out some of the non-essential busy-ness from your life: TV, magazine, newspaper and novel reading, morning coffee, unnecessary errands; and the endless, garrulous, self-centered, time-consuming talk that interests and entertains and benefits nobody.

Possessions — Put away some of the things that require too much polishing or pressing or upkeep. Cut out unnecessary shopping and buy only what you have to have. Try to spend less time and money on *things*.

SUGGESTIONS — Approach Lent with hope rather than determination (we are to rely on God, not ourselves!). Don't bite off more than you can chew. The permanent acquisition of one small good habit is a better objective than a rule of heroic sanctity that cannot be maintained. 'Whatever we choose to do should be (a) inconspicuous, (b) not inconvenient or irritating to other people, (c) really costing us something.' If these sacrifices of time and pleasures and possessions seem too much, let us take a long look at our Saviour hanging upon the Cross.

* From *Letters to the Prayer Group* by Evelyn Underhill.

Gifts for Lent

SELF-CHOSEN ACTIVITY is what many of us think of when we make plans for Lent. Things we do — going to church, saying our prayers and reading our Bibles more regularly, reading a 'Lenten' book, joining a study group. Things we resolve not to do — saying cross things, smoking, eating sweets, drinking cocktails or coffee. Things we give — alms to feed the hungry, a generous Easter offering to the Church. Things we feel — penitence (or at least self-reproach) when we hear a visiting preacher's call to repentance, a sober glow of piety when we crawl out of bed on week-day dawns to go to Holy Communion. But if we continue to think of the Christian life in terms of what we do or do not do, what we give and what we feel, we shall become enclosed in the self-occupation which is the opposite of true religion, and the intensified activity of Lent will do us more harm than good.

OUR ACTIVITY HAS VALUE ONLY AS A RESPONSE TO GOD'S GIVING — for '*Religion . . . begins and proceeds and ends with the Given . . .*' We would not be here if God had not, in the first place, given us life. God gave us the Church and drew us into it. God gives us our very prayer, for it is His gift of love and longing that draws us to our knees. God gave us the Bible, 'speaking by the mouth of his holy Prophets'; and the Holy Spirit, acting often in mysterious ways, gives us the books we need when we need them. Making use of the gifts of other Christians. God teaches us the Faith of His Holy Catholic Church. God gives us opportunities for self-denial, and it is He who gives us the means of giving to others. True penitence, sorrow for our sins, is given to us, too, but only after we learn to accept some of the other gifts. Even our emotions, the deep feelings of awe and wonder in God's Presence, the precious sense of His holiness that can grow into adoration, are gifts of God. Sometimes the gifts we prize most highly are withheld from us to teach us that it is not the gifts but the Giver upon whom we are to depend.

GIVEN-NESS CAN BE THE THEME OF A FRUITFUL FIVE-POINT LENTEN PROGRAM — We can:

1. Look upon Lent's increased opportunities for worship, and

especially for Holy Communion, as gifts from God, and accept and use them thankfully.

2. Look up in a concordance the words *gave*, and *give*, and note down the Bible passages where God is the Giver, and use these passages as the basis for our Lenten Bible reading and study, either by ourselves or in groups.
3. Use the opportunities for self-denial in food and luxuries that God gives us at every meal and in every shopping expedition (is this purchase necessary?) and give the money saved to *The Feed the Hungry Fund* for *The Presiding Bishop's Fund for World Relief*.
4. Ask God to help us to accept and use the opportunities for character building that He gives us every day of our lives, from childhood to the extremity of old age. These opportunities are often very unheroic and humdrum and frustrating, not at all what we ourselves would have chosen. We have all heard of the woman who prayed for patience and was given an ill-tempered cook. But however tiresome our daily trials may seem, they are, as we shall come to see in time, gifts of God and the raw material of holiness.
5. Try to dwell with deep thankfulness in our thoughts and prayers on 'the greatness of the Gift that we receive in our Communion — Christ himself, the whole Christ, all that He is and has. All that we can possibly need . . . is there, and is given. The fault, the hindrance, is only in our power of reception. . . . So we must try to cherish high and worthy thoughts of so great a Sacrament' wherein the Gift we receive is none other than the Giver Himself.



Lenten Gardening

The Fruit of Holiness

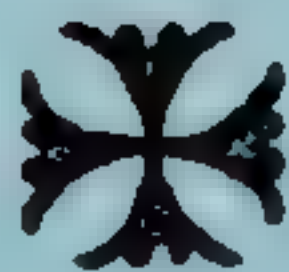
THE WORD LENT COMES FROM AN ANCIENT WORD MEANING SPRING — Spring is a time for growth in our gardens; Lent is a time for growth in our souls. Every gardener knows that although God makes the plants grow we have to work along with Him to make a beautiful and fruitful garden. And so it is with our lives. The blooms of Christian virtue and the fruits of Christian love will not grow in our souls unless they are nourished with heavenly food; and we must pull up the weeds of bad habits and make a determined assault upon pestiferous insects (especially the slug of sloth!) and upon the greedy birds of busy-ness. All our sins grow from the tough, unyielding roots of selfishness. These must be destroyed. Often, too, habits and relationships which are not in themselves sinful have to be eliminated from our lives because they take time and strength that should be given to God. They are like the voracious wisteria which sometimes has to be dug up to prevent its taking over the garden. How can we best cultivate our spiritual gardens during the Lenten growing season? Let us ask the Holy Spirit to guide us in making our plans and help us to bring them to fruition.

FEEDING AND WATERING — Our Lenten Rule should include a more frequent receiving of 'the spiritual food of the most precious Body and Blood of . . . our Saviour Jesus Christ.' This will involve early rising and for some of us driving to another town; but don't we often do these things in order to be with people who mean much less to us than the Holy One who comes to us at the altar? And we should prepare carefully for our Communions (Prayer Book, pages 85-87). The Word of God is the light of our souls and we must plan a definite time during Lent for additional meditation and Bible reading. There should be a not-to-be-interfered-with program of prayer (don't forget to pray while you are outdoors working in the garden), church services and study classes. 'Bow my heart to follow the words of Thy holy teachings, that they may distill into my soul as dew into the grass.'

PRUNING, WEEDING AND CULTIVATING — As we grow in the Christian life we become aware that most of the

really important pruning, and often it is painful, is done for us by the Heavenly Husbandman (St. John 15:1-2); but there is plenty of other work for us to do. Which of these things can we thin out to make time for our spiritual gardening: radio, TV, newspapers, magazines, novels, movies, parties, idle chatter? What specific sin can we try to uproot: conceit, bad temper, longing for things we haven't got, possessiveness with people, enviousness, laziness, greediness? Are we too dependent on our whims about food, on morning coffee, sweets, cigarettes? How about the discipline of the tongue? Trying to refrain from all criticism of others, all unkind remarks, all complaints, however trivial, from all holding the center of the stage in conversation. And we are not to go around talking about what we are 'giving up' for Lent; an important principle in all self-discipline is that it should be 'in secret.'

FRUIT AND FLOWERS — There are a few small early-blooming flowers that we can expect to see very soon: cheerfulness; kindness to unattractive, difficult people; letters and visits to neglected friends; soft answers to the ill-tempered; generous giving of time and money to the Church. But the blossoms of humility, adoration and sacrifice, like our cherished camellias, are of slow growth; and it is only after a great deal of feeding and watering and pruning and weeding and cultivating, only after a lifetime of response to the sure and loving action of our heavenly Father, that we can bring forth the Christ-like fruit of holiness.



Easter

Hail thee, festival day! blest day that art hallowed
forever;

Day whereon Christ arose, breaking the kingdom of
death.

Hymn 86

WHAT IS EASTER? Let us think a little about the deep, true meaning of this ancient yet ever new feast of our Lord's rising from the dead. Because we live in an increasingly pagan world, we shall have to peel off many layers of commercialism and sentimentality before we can arrive at the true core of Easter; and because Easter is an old story to us, we shall have to go back to the time when it was a breathtaking new story. We must indeed learn to come to each Easter as if it were the first Easter, not allowing habit to blur our vision or dull the sharp edge of our joy.

TO THE FIRST CHRISTIANS Christ's resurrection from the dead was *the* stupendous central fact of life. It was the constant theme of the apostles' preaching. Our Lord 'by his death . . . destroyed death, and by his rising to life again restored to us everlasting life.' He destroyed death. He gave us everlasting life. These were the facts that drew the early Christians into the Church. Then as now the thing people feared most was death. It is no wonder that they risked their lives to worship and follow the risen Lord, for whosoever liveth and believeth in Him shall never die.

WITH AN OVERWHELMING CERTAINTY these first Christians knew something that we tend to forget: that Christ's triumph over death on the first Easter was not an isolated event that happened once and then was over and done with, but the beginning for them, as it is for us, of a glorious new life, 'the life of the world to come.' And from that day to this Christians have met together on 'the first day of the week,' which before the finding of the empty tomb was a day like any other day, to partake of that new life in Holy Communion with their living Lord, 'having in remembrance his blessed passion and precious death, his mighty resurrection and glori-

ous ascension.' Thus every Sunday is a little Easter, and Easter itself 'is not only the commemoration of an event of 1900 years ago, though it is that. It is the feast also of His continual Resurrection in His body the Church and in His members — of the new life given in baptism of the new life restored in forgiveness, of the new life poured into the Church in the eucharistic union of herself with her risen Lord.'

AS WE GO TO THE EASTER ALTAR FOR THIS HOLY COMMUNION with our risen Lord, let us remember that because we receive the whole Christ, God and man, in this blessed sacrament we receive His glorious resurrection life, too, and that 'Like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.' (Romans 6:4)

CHRIST IS RISEN! HE IS RISEN INDEED, ALLELUIA.



The Ascension Day

Jesus reigns, adored by angels;
Man with God is on the throne;
Mighty Lord, in thine ascension,
We by faith behold our own.

Hymn 103

WE DECLARE OUR BELIEF THAT OUR LORD 'ASCENDED INTO HEAVEN' every time we stand up in church and say the Creeds. The New Testament tells us that 'he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God' (St. Mark 16:19), that 'it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven' (St. Luke 24:51), and that 'when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight' (Acts 1:9).

WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS STRANGE EVENT? Obviously not that our Lord was drawn up, as if by invisible wires, until He reached a *place* called heaven, situated directly above the earth. We do not know, nor need we know, exactly how our Lord ascended, nor where heaven is. He Himself said, '. . . I leave the world, and go to the Father' (St. John 16:18). We do know, as the early Church knew, that our Lord is in heaven, 'in the bosom of the Father' (St. John 1:18), 'on the right hand of God' (St. Mark 16:19), that He is 'the King of Glory.' These phrases are our poor human attempts to express the inexpressible, to say that He is outside time and space, that He is one with God, that He is in the place of highest honor. It is easy to see why the Ascension is one of those events in our Lord's life which are sometimes called the 'Glorious Mysteries,' for it is indeed glorious, and it is indeed mysterious, one of the many facts of our Faith which Christians know and believe but cannot understand.

THE ASCENSION SHOWED THE APOSTLES that Christ had entered into His glory and that they were no longer to expect to see their Lord upon earth. Nothing else

could have made them understand that the time for His earthly appearances was over. We might well think that the Ascension was an occasion of sorrow to the Apostles, as they realized that they would never see their beloved Lord again in this world; but we are told that they 'returned to Jerusalem with great joy' (St. Luke 24:52), for He Himself had told them that it was expedient for them that He should go away. His going was a necessary preliminary to the coming of the promised Comforter, the Holy Ghost, and to His own abiding in the Church.

BECAUSE HE IS NO LONGER SEEN, as of old, in the streets of Judaea or the lanes of Galilee, He can be intimately present in the hearts of Christian people everywhere; He can come to each and every one of us in the blessed Sacrament of the Holy Communion. As on Easter Day St. Mary Magdalene had to learn not to cling to His bodily presence (St. John 20:17), so we come to realize that our Saviour's entry into heaven means that He is not confined to one place but is ever with us, wherever we may be. And not only is He with us here, but by His Ascension He has taken our Manhood with Him into heaven; He has opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers.

THE BEAUTIFUL COLLECT FOR THE ASCENSION DAY should be constantly in our thoughts and in our prayers: 'Grant, we beseech thee, Almighty God, that like as we do believe thy only-begotten Son our Lord Jesus Christ to have ascended into the heavens; *so we may also in heart and mind thither ascend, and with him continually dwell*, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end. Amen.'

Let the petition stressed here be our 'spiritual bouquet' for Ascensiontide.



Pentecost,

Commonly called Whitsunday

HOW MANY OF US ARE AWARE that this feast of the bestowal of the Holy Spirit is one of the Church's three major festivals, celebrated for centuries before Christmas was ever observed at all? Christmas and Easter warm our hearts and fill our souls with joy, but many of us almost ignore Pentecost; it has little meaning for us. Let us think a little about the vivid account of the first Pentecost and what it meant and means to be 'filled with the Holy Ghost.' 'And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost . . .' (Acts 2:2-4)

WELL DO WE KNOW WHAT A 'RUSHING MIGHTY WIND' IS LIKE, for we have had various opportunities to observe the awe-inspiring hurricane. Think of the 'glorious pain' of being picked up and swept along by such a force! Think what it would be to be on fire with the holy, burning love of God, a fire far more irresistible than the great fires that sweep the forests, yet as warm and gentle as the blessed comfort of the fire in the living room grate on a cold winter's day. The Holy Ghost like wind and fire came to that little group of commonplace, uneducated people gathered together in Jerusalem; and they, who had been so silly and ineffectual and frightened and faithless, even in the very presence of their Lord, suddenly became brave and efficient and wise and true and loving. In the power of the Holy Ghost they braved dungeon, fire and sword to take the Gospel to 'the uttermost parts of the earth.' They became the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.

BUT THIS 'HOLY GHOST, THE LORD, AND GIVER OF LIFE,' Who proceedeth from the Father and the Son' is not all force and fire. St. Paul who knew Him well tells us that 'the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith.' In Confirmation the bishop prays that

we may receive the sevenfold gifts of the Holy Spirit: 'the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and ghostly strength, the spirit of knowledge and true godliness; . . . the spirit of holy fear.' Our Lord repeatedly speaks of the Holy Ghost as 'the Comforter' and we are to remember that to comfort means to make strong. In the collect for Monday in Whitsun Week we pray 'Send . . . thy Holy Spirit into our hearts, that he may direct and rule us according to thy will, comfort us in all our afflictions, defend us from all error, and lead us into all truth.'

THE HOLY FEAST OF PENTECOST REMINDS US that the Holy Ghost still dwells in the Church today. He will give us the power to fulfill the seemingly impossible commands that our blessed Lord has laid upon us, but only if we surrender 'our selves, our souls and bodies' to the doing of His will. 'The soul that is filled with the Spirit must have become purged of all pride or love of ease, all self-complacence and self-reliance; but that soul has found the only real dignity, the only lasting joy.'

COME HOLY GHOST, AND FILL THE HEARTS OF
THY FAITHFUL PEOPLE AND KINDLE IN THEM THE
FIRE OF THY LOVE.

This festival of the Holy Spirit is called *Pentecost* from a Greek word meaning fiftieth, because it was on the Jewish feast of Pentecost (50 days after the Pass-over) that the Holy Ghost came to the disciples. In England, where it is often cold at Easter, Pentecost, instead of Easter, was in ancient times the great day for baptisms. It came to be called *Whitsunday*, White Sunday, from the white robes worn by those who were baptised.



The Holy Trinity

I bind unto myself to-day the strong Name of the Trinity,
By invocation of the same, the Three in One, and One in
Three.

Hymn — 268

WHAT DOES THE WORD TRINITY CALL TO OUR MINDS? To many of us it means a long succession of somnolent summer Sundays. Faded green hangings in the church, embroidered with triangles and trefoils. A hymn learned in childhood and sung unthinkingly ever since. The Church's doctrine of the Holy Trinity we dismiss as something too difficult for us to understand and of no importance to our daily lives. The doctrine of the Trinity is too difficult for us to understand. It is a very great mystery. Nobody is expected to understand it. But, so essential is it to Christian living that if we are wise we shall learn what the Church believes and teaches about it. Bishop Gore says that 'It is only the belief in the TRINITY which enables us to think about God at all, or to worship Him with any degree of intelligence and satisfaction.'

WE CAN KNOW AND LOVE GOD ONLY AS HE REVEALS HIMSELF TO US, but fortunately our knowledge of Him need not be limited by our own meager experience, our own frail faith, our own small understanding. As members of the Church, 'which is the blessed company of all faithful people,' we are heirs of two thousand years of Christian wisdom; we share in the experience of all the holy men and women to whom, down through the long centuries, God has revealed Himself. We know how He has revealed Himself—as one God (and one only) in whom 'there are three distinct Persons. They are God the Father Who made us, God the Son, Jesus Christ, Who saved us from the effect of evil and Who is present with us in Holy Communion, and God the Holy Ghost Who guides us and gives us spiritual strength.' This is the doctrine of the Trinity. It sums up the real-life, everyday experience of countless Christians. It is stated with great care and precision in the creeds. Because it is the deepest thing that God has taught us about His nature and character,

it demands our deepest thought, our reverent study.* The fact that we cannot understand how God can be 'Three in One, and One in Three' need not distress us, for God must ever be beyond human understanding. It is not by understanding but 'by the confession of a true faith,' as the collect for Trinity Sunday reminds us, that we are given grace 'to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity.'

AS CHRISTIANS WE LIVE AND DIE IN THE NAME OF THE TRINITY, for the Church invokes it on every occasion when she seeks to convey the power of God. Every Christian is baptized 'In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.' It is in that threefold holy Name that deacons and priests are ordained and bishops consecrated, that sermons are preached; in that Name our Wedding rings are put upon our fingers and throughout our lives we receive God's forgiveness, His healing and His blessing; until in our solemn last hour we hear the words, 'Depart, O Christian soul, out of this world, In the Name of God the Father Almighty who created thee. In the Name of Jesus Christ who redeemed thee. In the Name of the Holy Ghost who sanctifieth thee.'

WE CAN BIND UNTO OURSELVES TODAY 'THE STRONG NAME OF THE TRINITY, by *invocation* of the same, . . .' not only with our lips in church but in our daily lives. Christians wise and simple in every generation have grown in reverence and wonder, love and humility, before 'God in Three Persons, blessed Trinity,' by praying the great adoring prayers of the Church. Let us memorize and use them, too.** In all our prayer let us seek to keep before us 'the realization of the Father of all, of the Son through whom we approach Him, and whose members we are, and of the Holy Spirit who prays within us.' And to help us to a constant sense of God's holiness and mystery, let us say, each time we sit down to read our Bibles, every time we kneel down to say our prayers: IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE SON, AND OF THE HOLY GHOST. AMEN.

* Suggestions—The Athanasian Creed; Chapter 12 of *The Faith Of The Church*; Chapter 5 of *Do You Want Inward Power?* by John Heuss;; Hymns 266 and 268.

**The Te Deum, p. 10, Gloria Patri, p. 9, Gloria in Excelsis, p. 25, Sanctus, p. 77, Book of Common Prayer.

The Trinity Season

Learning the Teaching

THE TRANQUIL TRINITY SEASON ALLOWS THE SOUL A TIME OF GROWTH AND ASSIMILATION after the rich devotional diet of the first half of the Christian Year. From Advent through Whitsuntide we live through the earthly life of our Lord, commemorating its great events in a series of varied seasons and vivid, dramatic festivals. Trinity Sunday reminds us of 'the character of the God who has been revealed through that life,' and during the remainder of the year we study the teachings of our Lord. But merely to say 'first half, life—second half, teaching' is to over-simplify, for 'we cannot divorce our Lord's life from His teaching, nor can we commemorate His life properly without applying its lessons to ourselves.'* Through the long summer and autumn, as the Church sets before us the series of Gospel lessons on the ministry of our Lord, let us remember two things: that we can grow only as we meditate upon His holy teaching and seek through our meditation to know God's will for us and to do that will; and that each deed and saying of our Lord, even the smallest parable, reveals to us something of the dear Redeemer and Saviour Who came to us in the manger, Who comes to us at the altar, Who in the final Advent 'shall come again, with glory, to judge both the quick and the dead.'

HISTORICAL NOTE — The first Sunday after Pentecost was first observed as Trinity Sunday in Liege, Belgium, in the tenth century. It is interesting to note that only in our Anglican Communion are the Sundays between Pentecost and Advent called Sundays 'after Trinity.' Throughout the Western Church from about the year 790 this season has always been called 'after Pentecost.' The devotion of the English people to the martyred Archbishop of Canterbury, St. Thomas a Becket, who was consecrated on Trinity Sunday in 1162, is responsible for the English custom, which we inherit, of calling the Sundays after Pentecost Sundays after Trinity.

* *The Worship of the Church*, p. 122 (Read 'The Trinity Season', p. 120-122).

The Transfiguration of Christ

The King in His Beauty

TO BEHOLD THE KING IN HIS BEAUTY is the Christian's dear desire, the beatific vision to which the saints look forward, which only heaven affords. But in the mysterious event which we call the Transfiguration of Christ three chosen witnesses, St. Peter, St. John and St. James, shared in the great mystical experience of seeing their Lord in His glory while they, and He, were still in human flesh. From the Bible accounts of the Transfiguration* we learn that the divine glory manifests itself as dazzling light, and yet is hidden from us in a cloud of unknowing, that our response to the vision of God is holy fear and a silent pondering in the heart. It is humbling and deeply helpful for us to be continually reminded that our religion is supernatural, that there is much in it that cannot be understood or expressed as long as we are in this world. It will help us to grow in the sense of awe and wonder if we meditate upon the vision of the three Apostles who 'were with him in the holy mount.'

O God, who on the mount didst reveal to chosen witnesses thine only-begotten Son wonderfully transfigured, in raiment white and glistening; Mercifully grant that we, being delivered from the disquietude of this world, may be permitted to behold the King in his beauty, who with thee, O Father, and thee, O Holy Ghost, liveth and reigneth, one God, world without end. Amen. (The Collect for the Transfiguration.)

* St. Matthew 17:1-6; St. Mark 9:2-8; St. Luke 9:26-36; II Peter 1:16.



All Saints' Day

and The Communion of Saints

FOR NEARLY TWO THOUSAND YEARS Christians all over the world, in numbers beyond counting, have stood up in their churches and said in the Apostles' Creed, 'I believe in the Communion of Saints,' and it is this great article of our faith that the Church commemorates on the Feast of All Saints. But how many of us really do believe in the Communion of Saints? How many of us know in our hearts what it is? We are told what it means — that all Christians near and far, living and departed, have an intimate, an organic, relationship that death does not interrupt, nor time nor distance sever. We are all members one of another. In these days when we think so much of the material and so little of the supernatural it is difficult for us to understand just how this may be.

OUR FELLOWSHIP IN SPACE is increasingly easy to understand and realize as modern rapid travel makes it possible for Christians from the ends of the earth to meet and gather together. It helps us to understand our fellowship in time if we think how our lives have been influenced by the writings and teachings of other Christians who died long centuries ago. It helps us to think as we worship together in church that not only are we surrounded by living members of the Body of Christ, but by all the 'blessed company of all faithful people' who have gone before us in that holy place. They have knelt where we are kneeling; their prayers are joined to ours; and we are caught up in a current of prayer that has been going up to God in that place perhaps for centuries.

LET US NEVER FORGET THAT DEATH IS BUT AN INCIDENT in the life of the Christian, 'a gateway along the road, opening into wider vistas of glory.' We are not separated from those who have gone before us, nor are they separated from us. They, together with 'all the saints of all the past ages, are with us, knowing our difficulties and temptations and struggles, and supporting us with their unceasing prayers . . . When we are troubled, the blessed ones . . . go

out to us with that perfect sympathy which they can feel because they remember the days of their earthly pilgrimage when they suffered as we are suffering now, from temptation or distress of any kind. And as they realize our difficulties and loneliness, they lift up holy hands to God for us, and we can be sure that their perfect prayers in the place of their happy repose are heard and answered. Another thing we must remember about the Communion of Saints is that we are members of the Body of Christ along with them . . . and we have our share in every grace or blessing that is given to any member of that Mystical Body. It is wonderful to think that there is never a prayer said, or a communion made, or a good work done for the love of God, but what we receive a share of the grace that comes from it, for we are all members one of another. And on the other hand, every prayer we say, every communion, every lifting up of our hearts lovingly to God, sends out through the whole Body of Christ, of which we are members, an impulse of strength and joy . . . What a powerful incentive to prayer and love this should be.’*

LET US PONDER ALL THIS on All Saints’ Day when we hear the beautiful Proper Preface in the Holy Communion service: “Who, in the multitude of thy Saints, has compassed us about with so great a cloud of witnesses that we, rejoicing in their fellowship, may run with patience the race that is set before us, and, together with them, may receive the crown of glory that fadeth not away.’

* The quotations in paragraph 3 are from *The Spiritual Letters of Shirley Carter Hughson*, O.H.C., used by permission. (Published by the Holy Cross Press, West Park, New York).



Feasts and Fasts

and Minor Observances

IF WE OPEN OUR PRAYER BOOKS to pages l and li in the introductory section, we see on the left 'A TABLE OF FEASTS, TO BE OBSERVED IN THIS CHURCH THROUGHOUT THE YEAR' and on the right 'A TABLE OF FASTS' listing 'DAYS OF FASTING, ON WHICH THE CHURCH REQUIRES SUCH A MEASURE OF ABSTINENCE AS IS MORE ESPECIALLY SUITED TO EXTRAORDINARY ACTS AND EXERCISES OF DEVOTION.' Every Sunday is a feast day, in memory of Easter, and every Friday is a fast day, in memory of the Crucifixion. The other feasts & fasts occur annually, except for the Ember Days 'at the four seasons.' Attending Holy Communion is the proper way to observe a feast day (our Church provides collects, epistles and gospels for all those on our list); and special good things to eat and special prayers and stories help to fix them in the hearts of children. As to fasts—our self-indulgent age tends to overlook the spiritual value of these 'extraordinary acts and exercises of devotion,' though our Lord and Saviour, the Founder of the Christian Church, fasted, and wise and holy men and women follow His example. Not only do we receive spiritual and physical benefit from observing the Prayer Book fast days with acts of self-denial in food, but the practice enables us to save money to give to *The Feed the Hungry Fund* for *The Presiding Bishop's Fund for World Relief* to feed some of the least of our dear Lord's brethren who are hungry.

SAINTS' DAYS — The custom of keeping an annual festival in honor of a saint originated in the early Church's practice of having a special celebration of the Holy Eucharist on each anniversary of a martyr's death, using his tomb as an altar. The second century word for a martyr's feast was always his 'birthday' since the true life of the Christian is in Eternity and the day of a martyr's death is the day of his birth into heaven. Just as affection and friendship are deepened by the annual remembrance of the earthly birthdays of our loved ones, so our Christian life is enriched if we make it a practice to observe the heavenly birthdays of the saints who have gone before us. Eighteen saints' days are included in our calendar. They are St. Andrew — November 30, St. Thomas — December

21, St. Stephen — December 26, St. John — December 27, the Holy Innocents — December 28, St. Paul — January 25, St. Matthias — February 24, St. Mark — April 25, St. Philip and St. James — May 1, St. Barnabas — June 11, St. John the Baptist — June 24, St. Peter — June 29, St. James the Great — July 25, St. Bartholomew — August 24, St. Matthew — September 21, St. Luke — October 18, St. Simon and St. Jude — October 28, All Saints — November 1. Many other saints' days are indicated on the Ordo Kalendar which enables us to observe the days of those whose names we bear, those whose books we read, our parish patron saints and others who especially interest us.

THE EMBER DAYS — at the four seasons — are twelve in number and fall on Wednesday, Friday and Saturday after (1) the First Sunday in Lent, (2) the Feast of Pentecost, (3) September 14 (Feast of the Holy Cross), and (4) December 13 (St. Lucy's Day). All twelve days are fast days and for many centuries it has been the Church's custom to pray with special emphasis on these days for the clergy and for all those who are preparing for Holy Orders. The word 'Ember' means period or circuit.

ROGATION DAYS — are 'days of solemn supplication' — the Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday before Ascension Day — when we ask God's blessing on the fruits of the earth and pray for a bountiful harvest. For many centuries it was the custom, and still is in some parishes, for clergy and people to go about the fields and farms in procession singing hymns and litanies. The word 'Rogation' comes from the Latin *rogare*, to ask.



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